



## OFFICE OF SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI FACT SHEET

### **SINCE WHEN ARE DISASTER AID FOR HURRICANE SURVIVORS, DISASTER AID FOR FARMERS, AND HEALTH COVERAGE FOR UNINSURED CHILDREN “PORK”?**

Over the last two weeks, President Bush and some Congressional Republicans have been charging that the FY 2007 Supplemental Appropriations bill contains \$21 billion of unneeded “pork”. They have successfully gotten some members of the media to repeat this charge.

Apparently, the “\$21 billion of pork” charge is derived from the fact that the FY 2007 Supplemental Appropriations bill contains \$21 billion more in funding than the President requested.

It is true that this bill provides \$21 billion more than the President requested, including the following:

- \$2.5 billion more for improving readiness of our stateside troops
- \$1.7 billion more for military health care
- \$1.7 billion more for veterans’ health care
- \$3.1 billion for Base Realignment and Closure
- \$3.7 billion more for agricultural assistance
- \$2.9 billion more for Gulf Coast Hurricane relief and recovery
- \$2.5 billion more for urgent homeland security needs
- \$1 billion more for pandemic flu preparedness
- \$735 million more for children’s health insurance needs
- \$500 million more for wildfire suppression
- \$400 million more for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

But which of the above is “unneeded pork”? Veterans’ health care? Military health care? Gulf Coast relief and recovery? Children’s health insurance needs?

These are all urgent needs of the American people – with many of them being necessary because the Republican-led 109<sup>th</sup> Congress failed to complete its work.

This fact sheet provides an overview of why all of these key items listed above are needed and how they respond to the urgent needs of Americans across the country – from those struggling in the Gulf Coast to children losing their health insurance in Georgia.

The fact sheet also provides information on a few of the smaller provisions that Republicans have delighted in ridiculing over the last two weeks, such as:

- Emergency aid for spinach producers
- Emergency aid for aquaculture producers
- Employee Safety -- Capitol Power Plant

# **Adding Needed Items Directly Related to the Iraq War**

First of all, the \$21 billion in spending that has been added to the President's request includes billions more to address needs that are directly related to the Iraq war, including:

- \$2.5 billion more for improving the military readiness of our stateside troops
- \$1.7 billion more for military health care
- \$1.7 billion more for veterans' health care

## **Improving Readiness of Our Stateside Troops - \$2.5 Billion**

The Supplemental includes \$2.5 billion not requested by the President to address the worst crisis in military readiness since the Vietnam era.

This crisis in military readiness was recently summarized by the Washington Post (3/19/07) as follows: "Four years after the invasion of Iraq, the high and growing demand for U.S. troops there and in Afghanistan has left ground forces in the United States short of the training, personnel and equipment that would be vital to fight a major ground conflict elsewhere, senior U.S. military and government officials acknowledge. More troubling, the officials say, is that it will take years for the Army and Marine Corps to recover from what some officials privately have called a 'death spiral.'" ... The risk to the nation is serious and deepening, senior officials warn, because the U.S. military now lacks a large strategic reserve of ground troops ready to respond quickly and decisively to potential foreign crises."

## **Military Health Care - \$1.7 Billion**

The Supplemental includes \$1.7 billion more than the President requested for military health care. The additional funding supports new initiatives to enhance medical services for active duty forces and mobilized personnel, and their family members. These initiatives include:

- \$450 million for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/Counseling
- \$450 million for Traumatic Brain Injury care and research
- \$730 million to prevent health care fee increases for our troops
- \$20 million to address the problems at Walter Reed
- \$14.8 million for burn care

## **Veterans' Health Care -- \$1.7 Billion**

The Supplemental includes \$1.7 billion above the President's request for initiatives to address the health care needs of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and the backlog in maintaining VA health care facilities, including:

- \$550 million to address the backlog in maintaining VA health care facilities – intended to prevent the VA from experiencing a situation similar to that found at Walter Reed
- \$250 million for medical administration to ensure there are sufficient personnel to support the growing number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and to maintain a high level of services for all veterans
- \$229 million for treating the growing number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans
- \$100 million for contract mental health care – with this funding allowing the VA to contract with private mental health care providers to ensure that Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are seen in the most timely and least disruptive fashion, including members of the Guard and Reserve
- \$62 million to speed up the processing of claims of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan

# Completing the Unfinished Business of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress

Secondly, the \$21 billion in spending that has been added to the President's request includes a series of items that represent the new 110<sup>th</sup> Congress attempting to complete the unfinished business of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. The 109<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned in December without completing much of its work, including meeting many unmet emergency needs of Americans across the country. For example, the Supplemental includes:

- \$3.7 billion more for agricultural disaster assistance
- \$2.9 billion more for Gulf Coast hurricane relief and recovery
- \$2.5 billion more for urgent homeland security needs
- \$1 billion more for pandemic flu preparedness
- \$750 million more for children's health insurance needs

## Agricultural Assistance -- \$3.7 Billion

Agricultural disaster assistance is a classic example of the work that the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress failed to complete. The need for agricultural disaster assistance was a key issue in the Congress in both 2005 and 2006, but work was never finalized – indeed, the Senate successfully passed an agricultural disaster assistance package in 2006 but it was never sent to the President.

The \$3.7 billion package of agricultural disaster assistance in this Supplemental is a fiscally responsible package – which is significantly scaled back from the Senate's original version of a \$6 billion package. It is a modest package to meet the most pressing needs for agricultural disaster assistance in 2005, 2006, and 2007. It provides compensation for only one-third of crop losses. Also, producers can only apply for a disaster payment for one of the three years included in the proposal. In addition, the package only assists farmers who have met their responsibility to purchase crop insurance.

The National Farmers Union calls this agricultural disaster assistance package urgently needed. 2005 and 2006 were devastating years for tens of thousands of the nation's farmers and ranchers. An unusual number of natural disasters, including hurricanes, droughts, floods, and other weather-related events caused serious damage to crops and livestock – affecting every region of the country. Indeed, more than 80 percent of U.S. counties were designated as disaster areas in 2005 and more than 60 percent in 2006. Examples include:

- In 2005, the State of Washington endured serious drought conditions that damaged all its major crops.
- In 2006, a severe heat wave in California led to serious losses of livestock and poultry.
- In North Dakota, all 53 counties were declared a disaster area in both 2005 and 2006.
- In Texas, a multi-year drought has led to major losses for thousands of ranchers and farmers.
- Mississippi farmers suffered from hurricane damage in 2005 and then from drought conditions in 2006.

Throughout 2006, a diverse coalition of more than 30 farm and allied organizations, including the National Farmers Union and the American Farm Bureau Federation, called upon Congress to respond to the record number of disasters in farm communities across the country – but to no avail.

## Gulf Coast Hurricane Relief and Recovery -- \$2.9 Billion

Another area where the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress failed to adequately respond to the urgent needs of Americans was Hurricane Katrina, which struck in August 2005. In the aftermath of the disaster, President Bush and congressional Republicans made many promises to the desperate residents of the region, but most have been broken. Much of the Gulf Coast remains devastated and residents continue to suffer from inadequate housing, health care and other basic services. More than a year and a half after Hurricane Katrina struck, the situation in the Gulf Coast remains an emergency.

One of the key hurricane recovery provisions in the Supplemental is a provision, which waives the local matching requirement for some FEMA disaster aid programs. A Washington Post editorial (4/1/07) has pointed out the critical importance of this provision: “New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin announced a redevelopment plan last week that might actually stand a chance of becoming reality... The \$1.1 billion plan relies on bonding and state grants, but the biggest share of the financing depends on the Federal Emergency Management Agency waiving a requirement that local jurisdictions in Louisiana supply 10 percent of the funds of infrastructure projects financed by FEMA. A waiver ... is tacked on to the supplemental spending bill for Iraq and Afghanistan that President Bush has promised to veto.”

The Supplemental also includes the following to meet some of the most pressing unmet needs of the residents of the Gulf Coast region, including:

- \$1.3 billion to repair and complete flood and storm damage reduction projects in Louisiana and Mississippi.
- \$140 million for farmers and ranchers affected by the hurricanes.
- \$120 million for disaster relief for fishing industries on the Louisiana Gulf Coast.
- \$30 million for colleges and universities and \$30 million for schools in the Gulf Coast most severely impacted by the hurricanes to help them recover to normal operations.
- \$25.1 million to allow the Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Program to continue to make and service disaster loans to homeowners and businesses, including those affected by the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes.

## **Urgent Homeland Security Needs -- \$2.5 Billion**

Throughout the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Republican Leadership had a poor record on homeland security issues. First of all, the leadership failed to act to implement many of the 9/11 Commission’s recommendations. Indeed, in December 2005, in its final report card, the 9/11 Commissioners gave the Administration and Congress many poor grades on implementing the recommendations – including 5 F’s, 12 D’s, 9 C’s, and 2 Incompletes. In addition, the Congress underfunded several key homeland security priorities – such as aviation security, port security, border security, and nuclear security – all of which had been highlighted by the 9/11 Commission.

Therefore, in order to make America safer, the Supplemental includes urgently-needed funding to address serious gaps in our homeland security, in the following areas, all of which were highlighted by the 9/11 Commission:

- \$1.25 billion for aviation security, including \$1 billion for explosive detection systems at high-priority airports, \$90 million to test and deploy advanced checkpoint explosive detection equipment and screening techniques, and \$160 million to increase air cargo screening on passenger aircraft.
- \$1.25 billion for port, transit and border security, including \$400 million for ports of entry radiation detection; \$515 million for prevention and response capabilities at ports, transit systems, and in our states; and \$250 million for container and northern border security.
- \$87 million for nuclear security, to accelerate the deployment of radiation detection equipment (for detecting nuclear material) for scanning shipping containers bound for the U.S. at high-priority international seaports.

## **Urgent State Children’s Health Insurance Needs -- \$735 Million**

The Republican-led Congress also left town in December without addressing the concerns of several states that, without immediate action by Congress, they would have to begin dropping children from the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP) due to funding shortfalls. Both Republican and Democratic Governors had made clear to Congress in the latter part of 2006 that they would not have enough money to keep all children in

S-CHIP on the rolls throughout FY 2007. And yet the GOP leadership chose to adjourn the Congress without addressing this urgent need.

By now, the situation has become even more urgent. In February, 13 Governors – 7 Republicans and 6 Democrats – wrote to Congress seeking swift action to protect the hundreds of thousands of children who could lose their health insurance. They wrote: “Health insurance for some of our states’ most vulnerable citizens is in jeopardy....Without quick congressional action, our states, all facing federal shortfalls, will be forced to make harsh decisions affecting the lives of thousands of families.” Therefore, the Supplemental provides the urgently-needed \$735 million requested by the Republican and Democratic governors to ensure that they do not have to remove any children from the S-CHIP program in the remaining months of FY 2007.

## **Urgent Needs on Pandemic Flu Preparedness -- \$1 Billion**

Finally, another urgent need that the Republican Leadership failed to adequately address in the previous Congress was the issue of pandemic flu. In the winter of 2006, public health experts began to increasingly warn that the bird flu could become the source of a deadly global influenza pandemic – as the bird flu moved out of Asia, across Europe, and down into Africa. All were relieved when a pandemic failed to break out in 2006. However, scientists are warning that the bird flu is as dangerous and unpredictable as ever. It killed more people in 2006 than in did in 2005 or 2004, and its fatality rate is rising. More worrisome is that the disease is out of control in birds in more places than ever, including the Nile delta in Egypt and Nigeria, where public health mechanisms are weak.

Therefore, the Supplemental provides \$1 billion for urgently needed funding for Pandemic Flu Preparedness. This \$1 billion would be used for the development and purchase of vaccine, antivirals, and other medical supplies that are needed to protect us from the potential pandemic.

## **Other Urgently Needed Provisions**

Finally, the bill includes funding for urgent unmet needs that have emerged in the last few months, including:

- \$500 million more for wildfire suppression
- \$400 million more for LIHEAP

### **Wildfire Suppression -- \$500 Million**

In the last couple of months, the need for \$500 million for urgent wildfire suppression has become clear. Drought conditions in various parts of the country are making this spring and summer likely to be one of the worst wildfire years on record. Here is how the Los Angeles Times (3/13/07), in an article entitled “It’s August in March for Fire Agencies,” recently summarized the situation in California, “As Southern California endures its driest 12 months on record, firefighters are dealing with something new: the yearlong fire season. The region has not experienced a major rainstorm in nearly a year... Already the dangerous conditions led the California Department of Forestry and the Riverside County Fire Department last week to increase staffing levels to those usually seen during the peak fire season. ‘There’s no doubt fire season is now year-round in Southern California,’ Riverside Fire Capt. Julie Hutchinson said.”

### **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) -- \$400 Million**

Additional funding is now urgently needed for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Some states are running out of money to help low-income homeowners pay their energy bills. This program is used help homeowners pay their heating bills in the winter and their air-conditioning bills in the spring the summer.

Alabama, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia are either out of money or are close to the bottom of their energy assistance funds. Several other states are rapidly depleting funds and are serving fewer clients or are reducing average payments.

As the USA Today (3/7/07) reported, “States are coping with the shortfall in different ways. Some have slashed the average amount of money they are giving from a year ago, while others are serving fewer people. In Rhode Island, for example, the average grant has stayed the same, but 2,000 fewer people will be served, a 7 percent decline. In Montana, the average benefit this year is \$387 versus \$608 last year. ...And some states are drawing on funds intended to help people pay air conditioning bills this summer.”

## Small Provisions That Have Been Misrepresented by Republicans

Finally, Republicans have taken small provisions in the Supplemental and misrepresented and ridiculed them. Following are some of the items that Republicans enjoy ridiculing – with an explanation of why these items are fully justified and are urgently needed.

- **Emergency aid for spinach producers.** The Supplemental contains emergency aid for producers of fresh spinach who suffered significant losses when they voluntarily pulled fresh spinach from markets in reaction to the FDA’s public health advisory issued in September 2006 – in reaction to the *e coli* outbreak. The FDA did not have the authority to impose a mandatory recall – but producers responded to the voluntary advisory. As Rep. David Obey has stated, “Doesn’t the government that asked these people to participate in the withdrawal in order to protect public health, doesn’t that government have an obligation to people who exercise their patriotic duty and do what they were asked?” Some producers ended up near bankruptcy as a result.
- **Emergency aid for aquaculture producers.** Similarly, the Supplemental includes emergency aid for certain aquaculture producers. In eight states, fish farmers woke up one morning and discovered that the Federal Government had issued an edict which prevented them from transferring their product across state lines because lake trout, in the Great Lakes region, had been discovered to have viral hemorrhagic septicemia, a highly virulent fish disease. If it was allowed to get in the Great Lakes, it could have ruined the entire fish supply. So, the government said you can’t sell your fish across state lines. This emergency aid is to help those fish farmers who suffered devastating losses because of the federal edict.
- **Employee Safety at Capitol Power Plant.** The Supplemental provides urgently-needed funding for asbestos abatement and other safety improvements in the utility tunnels throughout the Capitol complex – in order to protect the health of those working in the tunnels. Roll Call (3/21/07) has described the need for the funds this way: “Asbestos officially was declared a lethal substance ... 25 years ago, and entities all over the country have been engaged in abatement activities ever since – except in the tunnels beneath our own Capitol complex. What’s gone on there is a horrific scandal ... Under the best of circumstances, the working environment for the 10-member Capitol ‘tunnel shop’ team resembles that of hell.”
- **Peanut storage.** The Supplemental simply continues peanut storage fees, which have been provided ever since the peanut program was overhauled from being a government-controlled program to a more market-based program in 2002, for one more year (crop year 2007) – until Congress reexamines all of the agriculture programs in the new Farm Bill. These peanut storage fees for 2007 were part of the FY 2007 Agriculture Appropriations bill – but were stripped out on the Floor on a technicality.